

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A surgical needle holder comprising:

an electrically insulated housing,

an insulated electrically-conducting support body within the housing for mounting a surgical needle, and

an actuating mechanism for the support body including an operating knob on the housing moveable by an operator from a first position to cause the mechanism to move the support body and withdraw the surgical needle within the housing, and a second position to move the needle to an operating position external to the housing, and

means biasing the actuating mechanism to said first position so that when the operator releases the operating knob the needle is automatically withdrawn within the housing of the needle holder. holder, wherein the actuating mechanism is in the form of a moveable plunger carrying the surgical needle and mounted within the holder, and spring means acting to bias the plunger when under tension as the plunger is moved to the forward position, thereby constraining the plunger to return the needle to the withdrawn position when the tensioning force is removed upon release of the operating knob.

Claim 2 (Cancelled)

3. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The surgical needle holder as claimed in Claim ~~2~~ 1 wherein the plunger has an actuating arm extending through a slot in the housing to engage the operating knob, said slot having a longitudinal-extent delimiting the forward and reverse movements of the plunger.

4. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The surgical needle as claimed in claim ~~3~~ 1 wherein the spring means is in the form of a coiled spring around an electrically conducting shaft attached to the plunger, the coiled spring being held between two statements one of which is fixed on the shaft, the other stationary, such that the coiled spring is compressed upon movement of the plunger to the forward position between the fixed abutments so providing the constraining force tending to return the plunger to its withdrawn position.

5. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The surgical needle holder as claimed in claim ~~4~~ 1 wherein the electrically-conducting shaft is slidable within a hollow tube, the hollow tube being sleeved with an electrically-conductive material connected to an electrical connector within the tail end of the housing.

6. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The surgical needle holder as claimed in claim ~~5~~ 1 wherein the plunger is provided with an axially-extending ejector pin bearing on the shank of the needle holder and a spring held under tension between the ejector pin and the electrically-conducting shaft such that when the surgical needle is ~~released~~ released, the ejector pin propels the needle from the holder ready for installation of a new surgical needle.